

PowerPoint XP (2002) for academic posters

Practical workbook

Aims and Learning Objectives

These practical tips and guidelines for producing posters in PowerPoint will help you to:

- plan and design a large, academic poster to present your research;
- set up PowerPoint for A0 size;
- use guides and text boxes;
- insert and format text;
- insert and modify image files;
- add colours, borders and backgrounds;
- use Group, Align and Distribute tools;
- consider print options for large formats;
- access further design tips and websites for poster competitions and poster design.

Document information

Course documents and files

If you are using this document in a training room in the Computer Centre, the practice files are stored in the folder **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters**.

If you are using this document for self-study, the practice files associated with this document (document number pptxp-ss3) are from the following URL:

www.bristol.ac.uk/is/learning/courses/studentcourses/resources-presenting.html

You will see a link to Practice files. This contains the files you need to work through the course notes. In Internet Explorer you extract the files as follows:

- Click on **Practice files**;
- Choose **Save**.
- Browse to where you want to save the file and click on **Save** (the practice files are grouped together, and you need to extract them to be able to use the individual files);
- Go to the file you have just saved, and **Open** or **Run** it to show the **Self-extracting Archive** box;
- Select where to extract (save) the files on your system using the browse button (as shown  opposite);
- Click **Start** to save the files.

Related documentation

Other related documents are available from the web at:

www.bristol.ac.uk/is/learning/courses/studentcourses/resources-presenting.html

Introduction

This document is an aid to producing academic posters for presentation at conferences, etc. Although PowerPoint was not designed for producing posters, it can be set up to do so.

There are different ways of achieving this. The notes here simply offer guidance for approaching this, within the limitations of using PowerPoint for this task.

A practice exercise also offers the chance to re-create a large, academic poster using text files and images provided. These items have been extracted from a prize-winning poster produced by a UoB student.

Prerequisites

To follow this course, you must be able to manipulate images and text boxes, format text and use the commands on the Draw menu and on the drawing toolbar. These skills can be acquired by attending one of the courses: Further PowerPoint (see Staff Development Course Diary) or Making more of PowerPoint (see the student Courses On-Line Booking System at www.bristol.ac.uk/studentskills).

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Task 1 Posters in PowerPoint

Objectives To create a large, academic poster in PowerPoint.

Comments In these notes you will find:

- tips and guidelines for creating your own poster (further details in Appendix A, Appendix C and Appendix D);
- guidance for re-creating an existing A0 academic poster, using text and image files provided;
- tables showing the layout and formatting used in the original poster (Appendix A and Appendix B).

Alternatively you may use these materials as a basis for your own design and layout, as you wish.

To re-create the poster using files provided for this task

1.1 The aim of this exercise is to re-create the original poster (or design your own), incorporating the text and image files provided. Refer to the following notes for tips and techniques in PowerPoint.

- If using these notes in a Computer Centre Training Room, have a look at the A3 laminated example of the poster. The original PowerPoint file is also available at: **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters\poster_original.ppt**.
- The Word document text files used for this exercise are in the folder: **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters** (eg text1_background.doc and caption6.doc).
- The image files (which have been saved in various picture formats) are also in: **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters** (eg chart1.bmp and chart8.jpg).
- Appendix A and Appendix B contain tables showing which text files and formatting were used in the original poster, and the approximate layout.

Note If using these notes for self-study, see the Related Documentation section at the beginning of these notes for details of the location of these practice files.

Before you start

It is very important to set the **poster size** first. Otherwise, if you work in A4 and later scale it up to A0, the print quality will be poor especially for any images included.

If producing a poster for a competition, check the rules or requirements – especially the size – before you begin. This exercise is based on **A0 size, landscape**.

Starting PowerPoint XP and setting up for A0 size

1.2 Go to: **Start / Programmes / Microsoft Office XP / PowerPoint**.

- From the **New Presentation** task pane, click **Blank Presentation**.
- Choose the **Blank** slide layout (first left, under **Content Layouts**).

Note Avoid choosing a layout with Title or Text placeholders, as these are pre-formatted for larger font sizes than required for this task, and may cause formatting problems later. If you have a Title and Text layout, click on the Blank slide layout in task pane.

- Go to **File / Page setup**.
- From the **Slides sized for** list, choose **Custom** (see Figure 1):

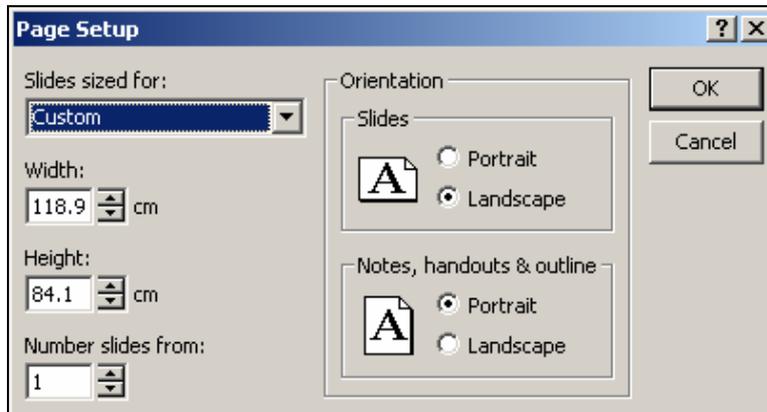


Figure 1 - page setup for A0 size

- Type in the sizes required. For exact **A0** this will be:
Width: **118.9 cm (46")**
Height: **84.1 cm (33")** as shown above.
- **Orientation** for Slides should automatically show **Landscape**.
- Click **OK**, and save the file.

Note When creating your own poster, the size will depend on the printer you have available. You will probably have to allow for a non-printable margin, and reduce your poster size a little, accordingly. Please check print size limitations before you begin.

If working to a different size, the standard international paper sizes are:

A0 – 118.9 x 84.1 cm	A2 – 59.4 x 42 cm
A1 – 84.1 x 59.4 cm	A3 – 42 x 29.7 cm

Using guides and ruler

For a large, complex layout, it may help to use **Guides** (moveable dotted lines that appear on the screen but do not print) and to view the **Ruler** to help arrange them precisely:

Viewing the ruler

- 1.3** Choose **View / Ruler** to turn it on (or off, later).

Viewing and adding guides

- Choose **View / Grid and Guides**.
- Tick the **Guide settings** to **Display drawing guides on screen** (Other guide options are explained more fully later and shown in Figure 3).
- This gives one horizontal and one vertical guide. To add another guide, hold down the **<Ctrl>** key and **drag** an existing guide across. Repeat for more guides.
- Add and drag guides across as appropriate for your design layout, to help line up text and images (see Figure 2).

- To align them, click on a guide to see its distance from the centre. There is no quick way to space them evenly, but as you drag a guide, check its position on the ruler.
- For this exercise, add guides (as shown in Figure 2) to create:
a **margin** at each edge, 4 main **columns** and a **title area** at the top.
For more accuracy, add extra (narrow) columns to leave space between text boxes:

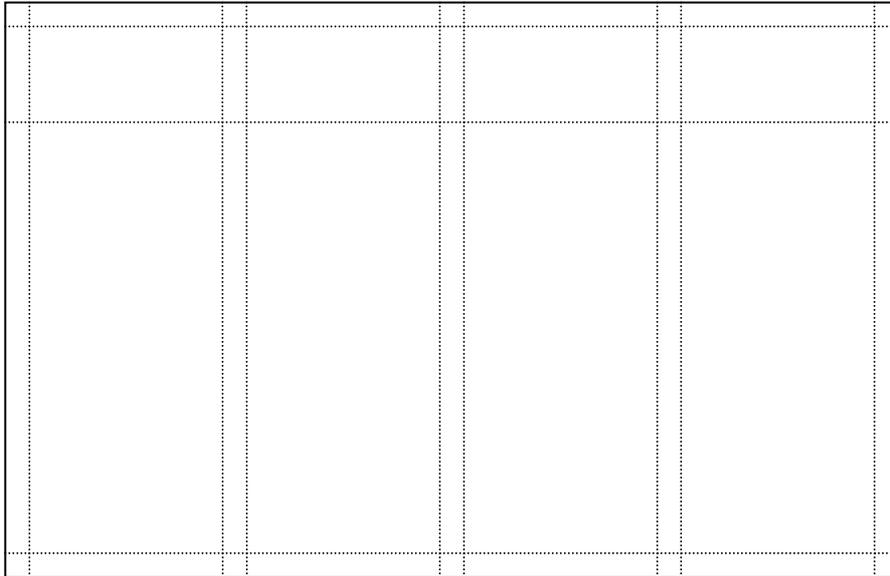


Figure 2 - setting up guides

Deleting and hiding guides

- To delete a guide, drag it off the slide.
- To hide the guides without deleting them, return to **View / Grid and Guides** and un-tick **Display drawing guides on screen**.

Creating text boxes

Usually it is best to type straight into text boxes within PowerPoint, but text files are offered here to save you time. You will need to open Word first, then copy and paste each piece of text into a PowerPoint text box:

1.4 In PowerPoint:

- Click the **Text Box** button on the **Drawing** toolbar (as shown opposite).
- Click and drag across, to place a text box where required on the slide. It will expand when you add text.



Adding text from a Word document

1.5 For this exercise, keeping PowerPoint open, from the **Start** button open Word: **Programmes / Microsoft Office XP / Word.**

- Open the relevant file from: **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters**
- For a guide as to which file relates to which text box in the poster, see Appendix A (or use randomly as you wish, just for practice).

- Select just the text required, without any extra space around it, (or delete any extra space first, then press **<Ctrl> + <A>** to Select All).
- Copy it from Word (shortcut: **<Ctrl> + <C>**)
- Paste it into the PowerPoint text box (shortcut: **<Ctrl> + <V>**).
- To change **Word wrap** options, right-click in the text box and choose **Format Text Box / Text Box** tab.

Formatting text

1.6 For this exercise, for a guide as to which fonts and sizes are used in different sections of this poster, see Appendix B.

- Select and format the text in the usual way.

Note For your own poster, try different fonts and sizes to see what fits best. Some fonts take up more space than others, even for the same 'font size'. There are different design considerations too: Generally, a sans-serif font such as Arial is clearer to read (especially from a distance) but Times New Roman will allow you to fit more text into the same space. So it may be appropriate to use a sans-serif font, eg Arial, for headings and Times New Roman for the main text.

Moving and aligning text boxes or images

1.7 To move an object, click and drag it on the slide:

Aligning objects to guides – or not

- Drag the object near to a guide, and its edge or centre will snap to the guide.
- To free you from this and allow finer control, press the **<Alt>** key as you drag the object.

Moving and aligning objects with precision

The grid is a set of lines, normally invisible, to which objects are attracted (by default). The spacing of the grid, and whether objects snap to it, is controlled by options in **View / Grid and Guides**.

If you also wish objects to tend to line up with each other:

1.8 Choose **View / Grid and Guides**.

- Tick **Snap objects to other objects**.

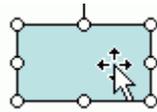
The image shows a screenshot of the 'Grid and Guides' dialog box in PowerPoint XP. The dialog box has a title bar with a question mark and a close button. It contains several sections: 'Snap to' with a text input field and two checkboxes, 'Grid settings' with a 'Spacing' dropdown set to '0.125 cm' and a 'Display grid on screen' checkbox, and 'Guide settings' with a 'Display drawing guides on screen' checkbox. At the bottom are 'Set as Default', 'OK', and 'Cancel' buttons. Five callout boxes with arrows point to specific parts of the dialog:

- Top-left: 'Default setting: The grid acts like a magnet, attracting objects which are moved close to it.' (points to the 'Snap objects to grid' checkbox)
- Bottom-left: 'Display grid or guides to help manual positioning of objects.' (points to the 'Display grid on screen' checkbox)
- Bottom-right: 'Define space between lines of the grid, ie how fine it is.' (points to the 'Spacing' dropdown)
- Right: 'Give objects grid lines that go through their vertical and horizontal edges. These exert a "magnetic" pull on other objects, helping to align them.' (points to the 'Snap objects to other objects' checkbox)
- Bottom-right: 'Define space between lines of the grid, ie how fine it is.' (points to the 'Display drawing guides on screen' checkbox)

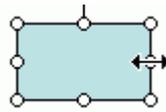
Figure 3 - grid and guides

Move and re-size objects

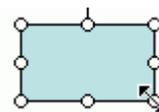
- 1.9 Select and drag an object to move it.
Remember to check that the mouse-pointer is right for the task (point to the middle of an object to move it, or on a 'handle' to re-size):



move



re-size (width-ways)



re-size (height and width) from a corner

- To constrain an object so that it moves only horizontally or vertically, press the **<Shift>** key as you drag it.
- You can also nudge an object into place by selecting it and using arrow keys.

Align, order and group objects

- 1.10 To align any number of items (text boxes, images etc) on the slide:

- Select all the items you wish to align (select one, and hold down the **<Shift>** key while selecting more objects together).
- From the **Draw** menu (bottom left of screen) choose **Align or Distribute** (see Figure 4).
- Click the option you require (eg **Align Top** for a row of objects).
- Use the same menu to **Distribute** items in relation to each other, for example **Distribute Horizontally**.

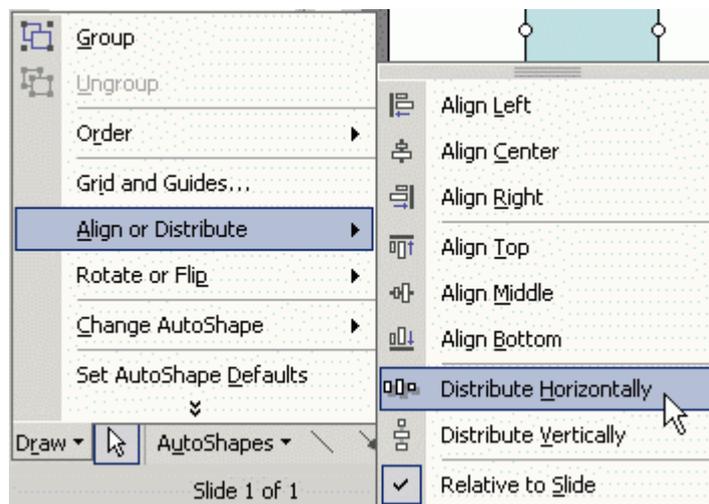


Figure 4 - Align or Distribute options

Note To distribute objects evenly across the slide, you may need to first tick **Relative to Slide** (bottom of menu - see Figure 4) then go in again to choose Distribute Horizontally. (However if this is ticked when you choose Align Top, objects will go to top of slide!)

Ordering and grouping objects

- 1.11 To arrange objects such as text boxes and images in your poster, some further commands in the **Draw** menu (bottom left of screen) can be useful, eg:

Order

If you need to add one item on top of another, eg a logo onto a coloured box, remember you can use **Order** options from the **Draw** menu to bring the selected object forward, or send the selected background shape to the back.

Group

To help with your layout, you can group together any combination of images and text boxes that you want to keep together. For example:

- Select two or more text boxes.
- From the **Draw** menu click **Group**.
- You can now drag, move or re-size this group as one item.

Remember, if you wish to modify any of these components later you will need to **Ungroup** them again first. (Select the group then click on **Draw / Ungroup**).

To add a line around a group of objects

- 1.12 A simple way to add a line around a group of objects, is to add a rectangle and then remove its fill colour, to leave just the line:

- Click the rectangle tool (drawing toolbar) then click and drag a rectangle shape approximately where needed on the slide.
- With it still selected, click the drop-down arrow next to the **Fill Color** icon and choose **No Fill**:

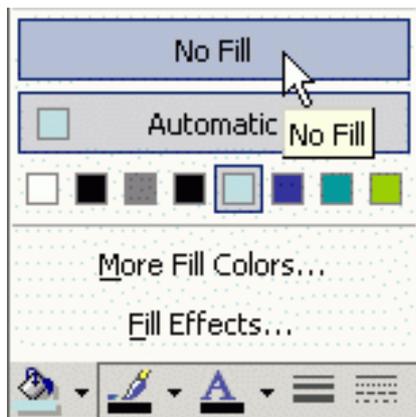


Figure 5 – removing Fill Color from a shape

- You can resize the rectangle as needed and modify the line using the **Line Color** and **Line Style** icons (drawing toolbar).

Colours and borders

- 1.13** Well-chosen colours can be used to great effect to enhance your poster. Use bolder colours for areas you wish to emphasise (such as main headings) and softer colours for subheadings, for example. Try to keep good contrast between text and background colour.

Text box colours and borders

- Select the main heading text box.
- Go to **Format / Text Box**.
- Choose **Fill Color**, **Line Color** and **Line Weight** as you wish.
- To apply the same colours to a number of text boxes, you can select them together by holding down the **<Shift>** key, then apply formatting as above.

Poster background

- 1.14** Try different background colours for your poster, to find one that complements the main content without distracting from it.

To apply a plain background colour:

- Go to **Format / Background** and click the dropdown arrow within it (see Figure 6).
- Try **More colors** or **Fill Effects** for further options.

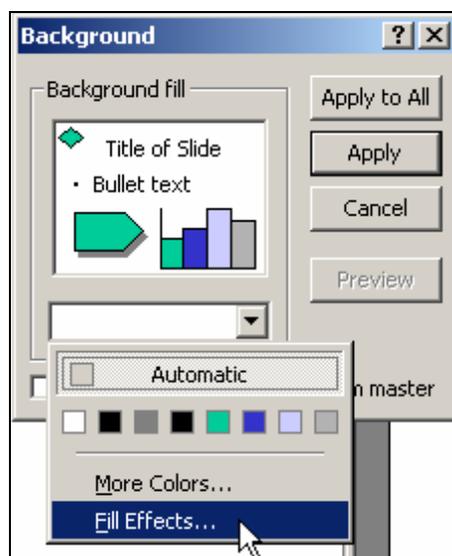


Figure 6 - background options

To apply a picture as a background:

While a plain background colour is probably safer and often recommended, sometimes a picture related to the topic can work well, providing it does not distract from or obscure the text. The picture must be prepared and saved as an image file first.

- Go to **Format / Background** and click the dropdown arrow:
- Click on **Fill Effects**, then the **Pictures** tab.
- Click the **Select Picture** button to browse for your image file (previously prepared and saved).

- Click **Insert, OK** and **Apply**.

Inserting images and charts

Inserting images from file

- 1.15 To insert a previously-saved image, go to: **Insert / Picture / From file**.
- **Browse** to the saved picture file. Charts and logos for this exercise can be found in: **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters**
 - Click **insert**. Once inserted, select the image, move and re-size it as required.

Adding logos

The logos used for this exercise are:

- UOB logo, already saved in: **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters\ logo-screen.gif**.
- British Heart Foundation logo, saved as: **bhf_logo.gif**.

- 1.16 If you wish to give the UOB logo a transparent background:
- Insert the image (from file) into PowerPoint.
 - Select the image, and click **Set Transparent Color** button on the Picture toolbar:

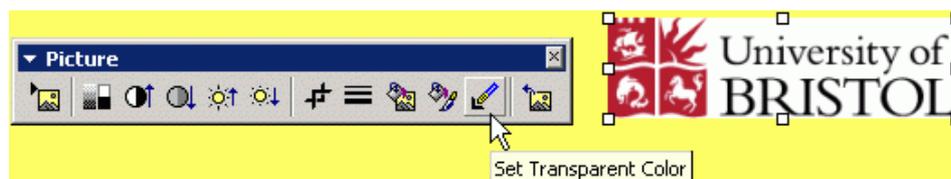


Figure 7 - set transparent color

- Click on the white background area of the logo with this tool.

Using images for your own poster

For a large poster, images need to be of good quality and high resolution to work well. A small picture stretched out is likely to pixilate and lose clarity. Prepare your images beforehand and check to see how they would print at the required size. It is advisable to save them into one folder, ready to insert.

- 1.17 For University of Bristol logos, and guidelines on how they may be used, see: www.bristol.ac.uk/cms/pro/visualidentity/.

Where to print A0 size posters

To print your poster full size, you need to find a large enough printer to handle this.

The University's Print Services can offer printing and laminating up to A0 size:

www.bristol.ac.uk/printservices/poster.html

Alternatively, try contacting the **School of Geographical Sciences** (geog-office@bristol.ac.uk) who can print up to A0 size for a charge.

The **Department of Pharmacology** owns a large format printer (A0 size) capable of printing posters for conferences/meetings etc. It was originally bought for internal use but other departments and faculties may use it on a paying basis. Contact the department for information.

Otherwise, you can try local commercial printing and publishing companies.

Appendix A Guide to text and images used in poster

Files are stored at: **C:\User\Powerpoint\Posters** in the training room.

UOB logo	main_heading.doc			Heart logo
text1_background.doc	2 caption2.doc Chart2	4 caption4.doc Chart6	6 caption6.doc Chart9	
text2_aim.doc	caption2.doc	caption4.doc	caption6.doc	
text3_methods.doc	3 caption3.doc Chart3 caption3.doc	caption4.doc Chart7 caption4.doc	caption6.doc Chart10 caption6.doc	
1 caption1.doc Chart1 caption1.doc	chart4 + caption3 caption3.doc chart5 + caption3	5 caption5.doc Chart8 caption5.doc	text4_summary.doc text5_acknowledge.doc text6_refs.doc	

Appendix B Guide to text and text box formatting used in poster

UOB logo	Main heading – Dotum (or Arial) 90 deep yellow background (bg) Sub-heading – Times 66			Heart logo
Heading – Arial 40 pt Text – Times 24 pt	2 Arial 36 mid-yellow bg Chart2	4 Arial 36 mid-yellow bg Chart6	6 Arial 36 mid-yellow bg Chart9	
Text – Times 24	Text – Times 24	Text – Times 24	Text – Times 24	
Text – Times 24 [Numbers – Arial 54 bold]	3 Arial 36 mid-yellow bg Chart3 Text – Times 24	Arial 30 light yellow bg Chart7 Text – Times 24	Arial 30 light yellow bg Chart10 Text – Times 24	
1 Arial 36 mid-yellow bg Chart1 Text – Times 24	chart+ Arial 30 light yellow bg Arial 30 light yellow bg chart+ Arial 30 light yellow bg	5 Arial 36 mid-yellow bg Chart8 Text – Times 24	Text – Times 24 pt Heading – Arial 40 Text – Times 24 Heading – Arial 40 Text – Arial 20	

Appendix C Further tips and guidelines for creating your own poster

Planning the content

Plan your poster before you begin. Think about the main topic and message you wish to convey, and plan the sequence rather like a storyboard. Some design tips are also included in Appendix D.

Preparing image files

Decide which images and charts you wish to include and prepare any image files first.

For complex charts and image files, you may need to go through several stages to arrive at a file-type that PowerPoint can accept.

For example, data captured from scientific instruments may need to be manipulated in several programmes, including image processors to render them in a suitable form. Ultimately, they need to be saved in a file format that PowerPoint can accept. The programmes Spike, Catch and Adobe Illustrator were among those used to create these examples. We cannot advise on these other programmes, but research students may find a supervisor or tutor in their department who is familiar with these processes.

File types that are acceptable to PowerPoint include:

- Enhanced Metafile (.emf);
- Graphics Interchange Format (.gif);
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (.jpg);
- Portable Network Graphics (.png);
- Windows Bitmap (.bmp, .rle, .dib);
- Windows Metafile (.wmf) graphics.

Additional file types can be used, providing a filter was installed with PowerPoint. For more information see the **Help** menu in PowerPoint.

Adding text directly

It is recommended to type directly into the text boxes in a large poster, because:

- text imported from elsewhere is likely to need re-sizing and reformatting within PowerPoint;
- typing directly into the poster helps you to be aware of how much (or how little!) space you have, and to write more concisely as appropriate.

Useful websites

Further excellent tips on **How to Make a Poster** may be found at:

www.bio.cam.ac.uk/gradschool/current/courses/postertalk1.htm.

The following website shows examples of a **Poster Competition** and winning posters:

www.grad.ucl.ac.uk/comp/2004/poster/.

Appendix D More guidelines for posters

Used for a Joint Inter-University poster competition.

Reproduced with permission from University College, London Graduate School.

Your poster should be designed to convey the essence of your research in a clear and eye-catching way, to appeal to colleagues as well as non-specialists.

The ideal poster will:

- attract passers-by to stop and take an interest;
- make a good impression;
- enable the viewer to remember key details of your research (what, why, how, who?);
- encourage viewers to contact you for more information about your research.

Poster size

You will have approximately 1 metre (height) by 2 metres (width) of space on which to display your poster.

Viewing distance

You should ensure that your poster can be read clearly from a distance of 1 metre or more.

Viewing time

It should be possible for the viewer to absorb the general information in your poster in a short time (up to 3 minutes).

General tips on how to present your poster

Title	Should be meaningful but not complicated. Try not to baffle the readers (especially the non-specialists).
Clarity	Your display should be visually clear and easy to follow, with a clear description of the aims and method.
Colour	Good use of colour is helpful. Even if the majority of the material is in black and white it is important to highlight with colour. However, bear in mind that too much colour can be visually confusing.
Message	Ensure that the general overview of the poster is clear, and that the more detailed information is not too complex.
Relevance	Demonstrate how your research fits in with the world as a whole, to help viewers relate to it.
Images	Make sure the images you use are clear and of good quality.
Graphics	These must be sharp and relevant to the presentation. Charts, drawings and illustrations should be simpler and more heavily drawn than those you would use for slides. Use of colour is encouraged to add emphasis effectively.
Font-style and	Be consistent in your choice of font, limiting yourself to one or two. Ensure

size	that the font sizes are legible from the indicated viewing distance.
Grouping	Text and graphics should be grouped together in relevant and visually stimulating sets.
Layout/flow	Guide the viewer's eye in an orderly way. Ensure that there is a logical path of items to be followed. It may be appropriate to link sections with lines or arrows.
Borders	Adding an outer border to your poster, and bordering any sections contained within, generally helps to define your display clearly.
Contributors	Identify any contributors other than those shown at the top of your display.
Contact point	Provide your contact details to encourage people to find out more about your research. This could involve adding leaflets or cards for readers to take with them.
Summary	A concise summary may be useful. This could be done by giving a set of key points.

Try to Avoid:

Window pane effect	Straight rows and columns of information are not visually stimulating especially if the size and content of each appears similar, giving a window-pane effect. Use a pattern of sections - this need not be regular.
Sparseness	Make sure that enough information is included on the poster. Don't make up for lack of information by using exceptionally large fonts and figures.
Clutter	Conversely, avoid having so much information that the sections presented are unable to stand apart.
Too much detail	Don't be tempted to include all you know on the subject - remember that the viewer has a limited time to look at your poster.
Irrelevant detail	Try to avoid inappropriate side issues that may detract from the main subject.